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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 000211

SIPDIS

EUCOM FOR J3, J4 AND J5

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [KPAO](#) [TU](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: USG-SOURCED WALL STREET JOURNAL ARTICLE MIXES
GLOBAL DEFENSE POSTURE AND INCIRLIK TROOP ROTATIONS,
COMPLICATING COOPERATION WITH TURKS

REF: A. (A) ANKARA 7800

[B](#). (B) ANKARA 7735

[C](#). (C) ANKARA 4841

(U) Classified by Ambassador Eric S. Edelman. Reasons: 1.5
(b) and (d).

[1](#). (C) Summary: A January 9 article in the Wall Street Journal that quotes U.S. officials and misleadingly links the review of U.S. global defense posture to the commencement of the rotation of U.S. troops to and from Iraq through the Incirlik Air Base was ill-timed and has complicated the Mission's ability to work with the government of Turkey on both issues. End Summary.

[2](#). (U) Citing senior Department of Defense officials, the article that appeared in the European edition of the Wall Street Journal on January 9, ties the agreement to "reopen" Incirlik Air Base to the review of global U.S. defense posture, including the repositioning of U.S. ground forces from Germany. The article confirms that troop rotations through Incirlik began last week and quotes U.S. officials as saying the U.S. would like to return to Incirlik in a more permanent way, including transiting troops through on exercises and using the base in other military operations.

[3](#). (U) The same day, the Turkish media quickly distorted the news further, with television reporting that Washington and Ankara had reached agreement on the opening of an additional "new base" in Turkey and using Incirlik for the shipment of munitions. The following day's print media compounded the WSJ's muddling of the two stories, claiming that the U.S. was planning to move troops from Europe to bases at Incirlik and Konya.

[4](#). (C) The Government of Turkey, while forthcoming in the arrangement to use Incirlik for troop rotations and open to deepening strategic cooperation with the U.S. in its effort to repair diplomatic and military ties, emphasized to us on December 19 (reftel A) its preference to handle the troop rotation issue in a low-key manner. In a January 2 meeting, the Ambassador and Prime Minister Erdogan agreed to maintain a low profile on the rotations due to force protection concerns and in deference to Turkish public opinion sensitivities.

[5](#). (U) When the commencement of troop rotations became a major news story, the GOT was forced to acknowledge the operations publicly. The discussion is growing with some questioning the legality of the authorization. The Embassy and the MFA are emphasizing that Incirlik is being used in accordance with Turkish law and in full compliance with mutually agreed guidelines for the use of the facility. The MFA's press guidance also notes that the rotations are in accordance with the Council of Ministers direction of June 2003 on the use of Turkish bases and ports for support of coalition operations in Iraq and are within the framework of UNSCR 1483. The Embassy and MFA are stating that the troops are in transit-only status as they move through Incirlik, and we are not confirming operational details or troop numbers.

[6](#). (C) Comment: While we would have preferred that the GOT adopt a more forward-leaning tack in announcing the use of Incirlik for troop rotations, we were committed to not preempting them by acknowledging the rotations through this Turkish base first. The timing of the Wall Street Journal article, sourced to U.S. officials, is likely to complicate efforts to work out with the Turks arrangements for other military operations and cooperation in the future. End Comment.

17. (U) Baghdad minimize considered.
EDELMAN